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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001786

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MCA](#) [MOPS](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: JORDAN: KING SACKS FOUR TOP GENERALS, UPSETTING
TRIBAL BALANCE IN MILITARY

REF: AMMAN 1764

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Lawrence Mandel
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: King Abdullah sacked four senior members of the Jordanian military during an emergency meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) on August 4. The firings have so far not been made public. In an unprecedented step, the King did not immediately announce replacements for the fired generals, upsetting the closely calibrated distribution of senior military positions among Jordan's influential tribes. End Summary.

The Axe Comes Down

¶2. (S/NF) The members of the JCS who were fired at the August 4 meeting are:

- Major General Talal Al Kofahi, Chief of Intelligence
- Major General Abdullah Sulaiman Shdaifat, Chief of Manpower (Human Resources)
- Major General Suhail Al Qatarneh, Chief of Logistics
- Major General Adel Qatarneh, Chief of Defense Resources and Investment Management

In addition to the departure of these four top generals, over 230 other military officials were fired, from colonels all the way down to second lieutenants. A letter announcing the firings was released on August 5 but did not provide any reasons or name replacements. While mass promotions and firings are common in Jordan as part of the regular June/November announcements, these firings appeared outside of the normal cycle. The firings were not covered in Jordanian media, but word quickly spread through the rumor mill.

¶3. (S/NF) Kofahi's departure is perhaps the most significant. As the senior general on the joint staff, he was seen as a potential successor to CHOD Khaled Sarayreh, who has been in his job for over seven years. Kofahi's departure leaves Major General Mohammed Raoud, who has served as Chief of Staff for Joint Operations since February 2007, as the most senior general on the joint staff and hence the odds-on favorite to succeed Sarayreh. Qatarneh's departure is also surprising -- he was just promoted to the joint staff in June.

Military Reaction

¶3. (S/NF) Military officials privately reacted to the firings with shock, saying the steps taken by the King are highly unusual. Brigadier Mohammad Awwad, Director of International Affairs for the military's General Headquarters, commented that senior positions on the JCS have traditionally been distributed by the King to tribal leaders

so as to create a comfortable balance among the tribes. When members of the JCS have been replaced in the past, they have been announced as resignations during the military's scheduled June/November retirement cycle. The fact that these firings come in such a large number, off the retirement cycle, and without named replacements to restore the tribal balance is unprecedented, said Awwad.

A Bold Move

14. (S/NF) An Embassy contact who met with the King shortly after the firings said that the actions were taken due to a general lack of responsiveness and competence on the part of senior generals. The King reportedly became frustrated with their lack of initiative and inability to act independently. Calling them "big delayers," the King chided the military leadership for failing to implement his designs for the military despite his clear directives. Other contacts see the firings as a bold move by the King given the tribal lock on senior positions. Commentators speculated that the King will eventually move to restore the tribal balance in the military's top ranks, but would wait to do so as a message to tribal leaders that political patronage appointments are a privilege rather than a right.

Comment

15. (S/NF) In the absence of a clear motivation or obvious explanation for the firings, contacts inside and outside of the military are generally at a loss to understand the King's

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motives. It is unclear whether or not there is any link between the firings and the King's almost simultaneous statement against "rumormongers" on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (Ref A). DAO contacts note that the promotions and firings of such senior level officials are usually accompanied by an elaborate kabuki dance of meetings with tribal leaders to adequately prepare the groundwork for a readjustment of the tribal balance. The suddenness of this action and subsequent lack of publicity or explanation has left most of our contacts scratching their heads. Post will continue to monitor and report on this issue as events warrant.
Mandel